Via Lactea
Lip and Sword
VOL .02
JIN SHISI CHAI
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唇枪Vol.02

JIN SHISI CHAI / 金十四钗

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SYNOPSIS

In order to find out the truth about his father's wrongful death in prison, med school graduate Xing Ming resolutely entered the news industry. With his dedication and commitment to pursuing journalism, he becomes a popular news anchor, known sometimes as an "Ice Prince." To clear his father's name and bring justice to his case, Xing Ming went so far as to sacrifice himself, clinging to influential and powerful people.

He hates Yu Zhongye's selfishness and indifference but has to accept his advice and help again and again. With Yu Zhongye's guidance, Xing Ming eventually grows into a professional journalist while also managing to keep the bottom line of reporting with integrity. As his show goes on, his life gradually unwinds, and the truth about his father's wrongful conviction gradually emerges…

But when he opened that final door, waiting for him was…

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Chapter 13

The Hatred for the Cuckoo Bird

Yu Zhongye didn't seem to blame Xing Ming for taking action before reporting to him. Instead, he had supported him in producing the episode, and Xing Ming was incredibly grateful for it. Later however, Ol' Chen inadvertently leaked him some news that effectively rained on this little imaginary parade of his.

As it turned out, before Xing Ming had ever set off to the infected area for the report, Chairman Yu had already organized a conference to discuss the issue of reporting on the MAV virus outbreak. There was no little opposition and discontent emerging from within the Station, and even some officials from the Ministry of Health had come for the negotiation. Then and there, Chairman Yu had personally proclaimed that media professionals were responsible for the representation of the interests and concerns of the public, so, while Pearl Station would not fan the fire of panic in the public, neither would they deliberately conceal any information. Even if *Oriental TV Line* had not planned an episode on the MAV virus, *Pearl Line* would have.

Taking the precious footage back to Pearl Station Garden, Xing Ming dared not oversleep and scheduled a meeting with his director early in the morning, intending to, at the last minute, produce an episode on the MAV virus.

Pressed for time, he stayed overnight at the station a few days. One morning, after his morning ablutions in the Station restroom, he ran into Lin Siquan, who had also gotten up early. It was unexpected, however, as the host on duty for today's *News China* was not him but Luo You.

Lin Siquan was a diligent and serious person, so much so that it fell into inflexibility.

It was said that he was adamant about warming up his voice early in the morning, a habit he had kept for over ten years. Each time before broadcasting, every piece of script had to be checked by him personally and he would repeatedly practice it with a word-by-word cadence, like a college student in the broadcasting stream who practiced Mandarin pronunciations every morning. In the industry, they referred to the mispronunciation of words by a host as "swallowing screws." Almost all longtime news hosts had swallowed screws a few times. That is, except for Lin Siquan, who had a pristine record. His unflustered style and impressive reputation came partially from the fact that, in over ten years of working experience, he had never made a single mistake.

Xing Ming was ashamed to admit that he was not as diligent as Lin Siquan. Xing Ming was adventurous; he lacked the patience to do such a repetitive task day after day.

It was a holiday, so there weren't as many staff members around as there usually were. Once the two men greeted each other, Xing Ming took a moment to thank Lin Siquan for the help he'd provided when he lent Xing Ming a director, who had

given great guidance to all the newcomers in Xing Ming's team. Then he asked, "Is Yu-*laoshi* coming today?"

"I heard from Ol' Lin that he already went out with Luo You early this morning. Boss Yu plans to build up a new media tech television company. A brand-new digitized broadcasting method like this would really challenge the interests and authority of other local radio and television stations. He has to take initiative and prepare to sort everything out with the upper management and officials before local stations try to pressure the National Administration[i]." Lin Siquan paused for a moment, reconsidering, then said, "Now that I think about it, Boss Yu might have already been heading this way when he recruited Luo You from East Asian Station."

Something so easily realized by Lin Siquan was naturally understood by Xing Ming as well.

It was harder to keep a business running than to start one up; after Chairman Yu had taken office, there had been frequent upheavals at Pearl Station, breaking conventions and traditions and earning enormous amounts of money. However, it wasn't easy to pave the way for everyone else like this. It would always feel like being at the center of a storm, besieged by turbulence and shattering pressure from all sides.

The good thing was that there was always the traditional Chinese way of sorting everything out through connections in complex social networks. And the age-old rules of such connections: glory for one is glory for all, and protecting a partner is protecting oneself.

Xing Ming had to admire Yu Zhongye for this. Luo You was an asset not only because of his professional ability. In fact, letting Luo You be cultivated by the East Asian Station, letting others spend all the resources and money necessary to foster such a perfect host, it had been a plot orchestrated by the clever old fox named Yu. Then, not only did he use a rival to sharpen his own knife, he took back this knife named Luo You to use in other endeavors.

"To be honest, I envy you quite a bit," Lin Siquan continued, seeing that Xing Ming wasn't speaking. "I've been working in the broadcasting profession at Pearl Station for over ten years. In avoiding the difficulties of going against the flow, I have come out the other side having learned nothing. If only I had been like you, becoming both writer and director, treating each episode as merely a practical lesson and going through metamorphosis every time."

"Don't say that." With what little innate empathy he had, Xing Ming wasn't good at comforting others. His eyes wandered around and his attitude was mechanical when he said, "With just your voice, Quan-*ge*, there is barely anyone in all of China capable of competing with you as a host."

"If I can't stay with *News China*, I might leave Pearl Station and apply to graduate school." Without noticing that Xing Ming wanted out of this awkward conversation, Lin Siquan shook his head, smiling bitterly. "I'm not a naturally talented person like you or Luo You. I got into Pearl Station as soon as I graduated, spent two years doing odd jobs, occasionally serving as a director for the audience

warm-up part of entertainment programs. Only, based on my personality, I wasn't even good enough for that. Every time after I'd struggled onstage, I'd always feel the urge to throw up. Then, one day while I was outside practicing my basic broadcasting skills after finishing my singing and dancing routine for audience warm-up, I unexpectedly encountered Boss Yu as he'd been passing by. At the time, he'd been just the college classmate of Boss Lei, the former chairman of the station. Afterward, he talked to Boss Lei, saying, 'That kid doesn't fit entertainment shows, but he's got some good basic skills. Maybe you can give him a try at doing news broadcasting.'"

There was detailed information about the chairman of Pearl Station on the online encyclopedia, Baidu Baike, explaining that he'd started out as a governmental official, then switched to a career in liberal arts before going into business. But with this current revelation, Xing Ming realized that he still knew nothing about Yu Zhongye.

He stared at Lin Siquan, his expression finally morphing into one of interest.

"One sentence influenced half of my life; whatever way you spin it, Boss Yu is my savior." Lin Siquan sank into melancholy, tears filling his eyes. Then he sighed out a deep breath. "The smile of the new lover hides the tears of ex; it applies also to the workplace. What's the point of talking about all of this, at this point?"

If it'd been others who heard these words, they would have probably regarded it as a way to express his gratitude in receiving help and encouragement from Yu Zhongye, but Xing Ming understood as clear as crystal. As the literal new lover, he suddenly felt a bit of empathy towards Lin Siquan, the ex, because Lin Siquan wasn't like Xing Ming; although they had both climbed into the same bed and had sex with the same person, Xing Ming possessed his own ulterior motives, and Lin Siquan only had his heartfelt emotions and the desire to repay a kindness.

Thinking it over, Xing Ming said, "At the moment, the audience voting still hasn't finished yet. You may not necessarily be the one leaving *News China*."

Lin Siquan just shook his head, saying, "For over half a month, my online approval has maintained a 20-30% compared to the competition. Could I even *make* a comeback?"

Xing Ming gave a nod of affirmation and stated with certainty, "You could."

With such little hope, Lin Siquan's voice sounded weak and weary. In disbelief, he asked, "If you were me, what would you do?"

After a short pause to think, Xing Ming answered, "I'd only need five seconds."

Xing Ming told Lin Siquan that if the on-duty program director were willing to collaborate with him, they could feign a mistake and allow for commentary. The direct sound and scene would disconnect, producing a time fracture, and compose a blank scene. It would only need five seconds.

It needed only five seconds, but it could only be five. If the fracture was too long, it would easily trigger a live broadcasting accident, and no one would dare to be the

scapegoat. However, if it was too short, the audience would not be able to realize that it was a mistake.

After five seconds, he could save the show by improvising for a short period. Then, they could hire two social media accounts, adding fuel to the fire by leaking the rumor—currently, the audience approval rating did not seem good, but at least it was not hopeless; Lin Siquan was the "voice of the nation" after all. With ten years of news broadcasting experience and such a beautiful voice and face, the audience was already used to him. Taking this incident as a chance to evoke the audience's sentiments, he would likely be able to turn the tables.

What were sentiments? They were the darning needle in the hands of a loving mother, the heart's desire for history's approval, and the reunion between two old acquaintances in the season of fading flowers. The point was, to the audience, this type of poetic and vaguely lamenting sentiment was the most appealing.

Lin Siquan felt as if he'd just breathed in the winter's chill. He stared at Xing Ming, stunned at the sheer nerve of this kid. Playing such a trick under the gaze of a few hundred million pairs of eyes, wasn't he afraid of losing control of the situation?

When Luo You first joined the Station with such an overwhelmingly intimidating reputation, if Lin Siquan had directly given up, it would have been his immediate execution. As it were, with the online audience voting, his death sentence had been merely deferred. As the timer slowly counted down to his inevitable death, wouldn't it be better to fight it, to struggle against it?

At least that was Xing Ming's thought process.

"It's just an idea. Such a risk under the eyes of hundreds of millions of people, it'd also need the program director's cooperation."

Though Xing Ming downplayed the suggestion, he wasn't actually worried about the program director. After all, people were only human; they made mistakes, and rules at the Station were not so strict. The consequences for such a blunder would have been merely paying a monetary fine or writing a self-inspection review. Being a hero alone would be reward enough; Host Lin was good at making friends after all these years at the station, and he'd have plenty of brothers-in-arms willing to make this sacrifice for him. It wouldn't be Xing Ming's business.

With the excuse of preparing for his show, Xing Ming bid Lin Siquan a goodbye.

News China aired at 7:00 PM on Thursdays, followed by the weather forecast, and *Oriental TV Lin*e started live-broadcasting at 7:40 PM. As such, Xing Ming was too busy preparing for his own show to pay attention to what Lin Siquan was doing.

It wasn't until his live broadcast ended and after he accompanied Su Qinghua back to his own office that Xing Ming heard from his colleagues: today's *News Chin*a had encountered a rare live-broadcast accident, but the on-duty host had kept calm amidst the chaos and saved the show through his sharp mind and wit. Praises prevailed widely all over the internet, and even the official Pearl Station Weibo

account was praising Lin Siquan for his calm and adaptable expertise.

Xing Ming used his phone to check the online comments. The corner his mouth curved up; everything was pretty good, as was expected.

After his original office space had been taken over by Luo You, Xing Ming's whole team had moved to another floor. While the lighting was not as perfect as it used to be, the move gained them a benefit; when they looked through the window, they could see an artificial waterhole in Pearl Station Garden called "Chang Xin Lake," adjacent to the broadcasting building that contained several studios and a base for digital broadcasting production. True to its enormous monetary sponsorship from the government, Pearl Station Garden was a beautiful landscape of water features and rockery, the envy of other television stations.

In the office, Su Qinghua played the first episode of *Oriental TV Line* on his computer to review some details with his apprentice. He remarked that Xing Ming did seem to have some degree of sensitivity toward the news, having initially chosen the trendy issue of "college discrimination against homosexual students" for the first three episodes of the program. He was able to guide the audience as they delved gradually into the story. However, Xing Ming was still a bit too impetuous to properly control the pace of the show, and his questions were also a bit too harsh.

Su Qinghua raised an example from the first episode of the live broadcasting show, during a scene when Cui Haofei and Cui Wenjun were crying on each other's shoulder. Only, with a word of instruction from Xing Ming, the program director had switched the scene away from the crying father and son, turning the camera to the audience. He seemed overly calm and even slightly impatient. From a spectator's view, he seemed coldblooded and callous.

"I'm not impatient," Xing Ming protested. This talk show wasn't for provoking audience emotions, so there'd been no need for him to act all soft and tender. The purpose of the show was to raise doubts, spur questions, and scrutinize societal norms, so his reaction had been reasonable.

Clearly a warrior of cold and cynical fury, yet also possessing the compassionate heart of a poet, Su Qinghua remarked, "Never put up a holier-than-thou façade of education when facing your audience, regardless of your style. Any host should know how to take advantage of a situation and adapt to the emotional needs of his audience."

Yu Zhongye had asked him to have restraint, and Su Qinghua now asked him to be tolerant. Xing Ming let the words flow in one ear and out the other. Though his hosting style did not match that of his *shifu*, he enjoyed listening to his critiques. With a sweet smile, he said, "Okay, fine. You can go on educating me and I'll humbly accept it, but I won't change. I'm pretty stubborn."

Su Qinghua sighed lightly and raised his hand to caress Xing Ming's forehead, saying, "You don't look so good. Are you sick?"

"People only get sick when they're not sufficiently busy." Though he said that, Xing Ming turned around and ate two pills like they were candy. Ever since he had

returned from the infected area, Xing Ming had sensed something wrong with himself. However, he was the kind of person who would not take anything seriously unless he was severely ill, for he was single-mindedly focused on finishing up this arc of his show.

As they spoke, Xing Ming's phone suddenly rang.

The ringtone continued, then paused for a while, then started up again. Without picking up the phone, Xing Ming threw periodic glances at the screen.

It was still Ol' Lin.

Su Qinghua asked Xing Ming, "Why aren't you picking up the phone?"

Xing Ming not only feared criticism from Chairman Yu, but he also feared blowing his own cover in front of his *shifu*, so he quickly turned off his phone. Shaking his head, he said, "It's a wrong number."

They stayed in the office until dawn, upon which Xing Ming drove Su Qinghua back home. Then, he went home to take a shower and rested his eyes for three quarter-hours on the sofa. Energy restored, he got back up.

Today's guest was an epidemiologist who had received special subsidies from the State Council. The program team had already dispatched a taxi for him, but Xing Ming still decided to pick him up in person and accompany him around the garden, trying to gain some familiarity and increase the possibility of a comfortable conversation.

The aged gentleman was healthy, walking spryly and talking intensively. He praised Pearl Station Garden profusely, and he mentioned having watched *Pearl Line* back when Xing Ming had been the host, saying that he never expected Xing Ming to be so sharp at such a young age.

Xing Ming donned a perpetual smile throughout their stroll, saying that he dared not be too sharp for the first few episodes of a new show in fear that he'd scare off all potential future guests.

It was nearing the time of the live broadcast, and, after a reminder from Ruan Ning, Xing Ming headed to the elevator, intending to descend a dozen floors to the studio hall on the ground floor.

When the elevator door opened, he met Luo You face-to-face. Xing Ming slightly frowned. It was a national holiday today, and there were no other shows planned, so he had no idea why Luo You would appear at that moment.

Raising his hand to pat Xing Ming's shoulder, Luo You smiled at him with a mouthful of white teeth as if in a display of genuine kindness and goodwill.

At a glance, Xing Ming saw the watch on Luo You's wrist. His whole body trembled, and he felt cold from head to toe.

It was a classic and unadorned gold-plated Longines, his father's watch, Xing

Hong's watch.

An argument between the two most handsome people at Pearl Station was exactly what a crowd loved to see. As it was quite loud, all the coworkers who were working overtime surged over to watch the dispute like it was school recess.

It was a pity that they did not arrive at the right time and were thus not able to hear the topic of the argument, but they all witnessed Xing Ming punching Luo You.

Luo You had been born with a silver spoon in his mouth. At school, he'd been praised by his teachers, and in the workforce, he'd been pampered by his superiors. He probably never expected that he would get punched in the face by someone, so he hesitated rather than dodged, and thus the hit landed. Xing Ming was a little bit taller than Luo You, and he had put the full force of his strength into this punch. Luo You staggered back, collapsing into the elevator.

Xing Ming did not intend to continue fighting, so he turned around and walked away. He was not disgusted by Luo You or Yu Zhongye. He was sickened by himself.

He'd gotten everything wrong. He had given his affection to the wrong person. It was always supposed to just be a trade of favors; he deserved this outcome.

"Hey, Xing Ming."

Not two steps out, Luo You called from behind, and Xing Ming turned around.

Luo You had gotten out of the elevator and had taken the watch off his wrist. He was smiling at Xing Ming sweetly. The corners of his mouth were torn, while his cheeks were swollen from bruising, but his smile was still captivating. Right in front of Xing Ming, his arm swung and the Longines watch flew out of his hand, tossed out of the window in a shimmering golden arc.

They were on the twentieth floor. Beneath was that artificial waterhole.

Xing Ming suddenly choked, and his shock was so obvious that even the crowd could clearly perceive it. They could not only see it but also almost hear it. It was like all the bones in his body had been flash-frozen, and with a single touch they would all shatter, disintegrating into ruin.

"Boss, the live broadcast is about to start." Ruan Ning did not dare to touch him, so he only called out with a quavering voice. He was afraid that Xing Ming would throw everything away and fight to the death against Luo You. He also feared that Xing Ming would jump off the building through the twentieth-story window—it really seemed like he intended to do so.

Almost all the people waiting around were in the mood for a good show. It was so rare to witness such an exciting fight between two such important people.

But Xing Ming didn't live up to their wishes. He only remained stunned, not fighting back.

Chapter 14

The Silhouette of a Cloud on a Lake

Although Xing Ming said he didn't care, he ended up tossing and turning the whole night.

There were several angles one could take while cutting into the topic. Examples being: people found it difficult to ask for reimbursement even with their health insurance; the country didn't give enough support to the medium and small-sized businesses that developed new drugs; the process of drug approvals was too lengthy and inefficient; high production costs led to the constantly high drug prices… Any angle could be a news-worthy story. Xing Ming kept his eyes wide-open in the deep darkness of the ward and stared at a ceiling he couldn't see clearly. He felt like there were countless little bugs crawling inside his blood vessels, annoying and itchy.

Since he couldn't sleep, he got up early just as the sky turned bright. After getting out of the bed and hiding from the nurses, he sneakily fled to the special care ward's library to do some research.

The library was elegantly decorated, with several pieces of Chinese watercolor paintings and calligraphy of famous artists hanging on the wall. Even the surface of the tables and the floor were spotless. Not many people were inside, just an old gentleman reading a book under the morning light with two young nurses accompanying him.

This older man was thin and not very tall. Although he wore a loose hospital gown with sky blue stripes, he still seemed hale and hearty, with a kind and tender appearance.

They had met each other once before, so Xing Ming immediately recognized him.

He was Yu Zhongye's father-in-law, Hong Wanliang.

After reading the book in his hands for a while, Hong Wanliang asked the nurse next to him to bring him *Healthcare Reform in China*, a new arrival at the library.

The nurse wasn't able to find the book, but Xing Ming deftly located it through the rows of bookshelves and took it out. He went over to Hong Wanliang and passed it to him.

Hong Wanliang was concentrating so hard on his book that he didn't even lift his head when he took the book from Xing Ming. Instead, he only gave a polite "Thank you." It wasn't until the nurse who went to find the book came back that he realized there was another person around.

Xing Ming took the initiative to introduce himself, stating his name and that he was a news program host from Pearl Station.

Chapter 15

Home

During the years, "home" had become a somewhat unfamiliar concept to Xing Ming.

A person's life could last thirty thousand days and basically consist of nothing more than living in terms of clothing, food, housing, and transport. Xing Ming lived a life where he drove a BMW, wore luxury brand clothing, and lived in a downtown area where most of the commercial businesses lay nearby, but he didn't have any particular taste in food. Xing Ming almost never cooked at the rental apartment he lived in. One reason was because he wanted to save himself the trouble due to his laziness. The other was because it would be a waste if he made several dishes just for himself. Other people's lives included their favorite flavors from various local cuisines from different areas of China: sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, or even spicy. Xing Ming, however, was used to having a meal of his own at a small restaurant or just from a convenience store. His stove at home was forgotten all year round.

A place without the smell of something cooking shouldn't be called a home.

When he thought of the past, his memories of "home" were just about the Xiang household where he'd lived after his mother remarried.

At that time, Xing Ming had just gotten into high school, while Xiang Xiaobo had already been kicked out of the city. One day, after the teacher finished class half an hour early, Xing Ming hurried home. But as soon as he entered the home, he heard an odd noise from the kitchen. Following the sound, he saw Xiang Yong's dark ass and Tang Wan's snow-white thighs. Xiang Yong was breathing heavily, while Tang Wan lovingly moaned. The dining table under their bodies shook ceaselessly like it was experiencing an earthquake. After a few seconds of stunned silence, he swiftly ran away without a word. However, he was still found out by the couple even amid their intense coitus. Worldly desires, seven emotions and six sensory pleasures, were the common needs of everyday people, yet Xiang Yong was extremely embarrassed by it and so was Tang Wan. Regarding himself as a reasonable son, one who shouldn't affect his parent's sex life, within two days, Xing Ming proposed his idea of living on campus to his stepfather.

Since it was only a ten-minute ride from home to school by bike, Xiang Yong agreed to the proposal without another word.

As soon as winter break arrived, Xing Ming applied for winter and summer housing at school together with the students who'd come from other cities but couldn't go home due to various reasons. Then Xing Ming explained to Xiang Yong that he couldn't go home for his own peace of mind because he had to fully prepare for a competition. Though the reason seemed pretty exaggerated, it was still convincing enough that Xiang Yong didn't try to intervene. Despite living alone all year round, Xing Ming always had enough money. Xiang Yong often went to see him. At first, he would buy him some daily necessities, but later when he wasn't sure what Xing Ming's preferred, he simply gave him money instead.

Chapter 16

Break Up

Ol' Lin called Xing Ming punctually at four in the afternoon, telling him that he had already contacted Hu Si Ye and was on the way to pick him up. To tell the truth, Xing Ming had been spacing out for the entire afternoon and hadn't actually worked on anything. After putting aside the interview script, Xing Ming asked Ol' Lin to park the car in a spot two streets away from Pearl Station Garden. Then, just like a thief, he snuck out of Pearl Station and got into the Bentley.

Since he was in a suspicious situation, Xing Ming didn't dare to brazenly show that he was Chairman Yu's new boytoy. He'd never regarded it as an honor.

The place near the sailing club that Hu Shiyin often visited was a resort called "Lovely Waterside Pavilions". Though the name was a bit cheesy, the services at the resort were all readily available. To say it in a more fashionable way, the resort was quite posh. Xing Ming met Hu Shiyin on the observation deck that overlooked the ocean.

Looking like he'd just gotten out from the water, he looked completely different than he had at the charity party that day. His silver hair was dyed red by the setting sun and clung to his face, dripping wet. The tight swimming shorts made his aged body even more noticeable, showing a bit of loose muscles and a slight beer belly. Xing Ming noticed Hu Shiyin was holding two young ladies on each of his sides. One of them was slightly plump, while the other one was slim. The plumper one had more beautiful features, while the slimmer one had a better temperament, but both of them had on overly-sweet smiles. During the day, he spent time sailing; at night, he indulged in pleasure with these beauties.

Xing Ming gave Hu Shiyin the painting from Yu Zhongye and politely spoke with him. Hu Shiyin accepted the painted handscroll, unfolded it, and then rolled it up.

"Thank Yu-*shu* for me. He really shouldn't have bothered." Then he laughed out loud, saying, "Your chairman is a really busy man now! He rarely ever has time to practice painting or write calligraphy. This painting is practically priceless!"

Xing Ming found it quite interesting that, while Yu Zhongye called Hu Shiyin "Si Ye," Hu Shiyin called him "Yu-*shu*." Clearly, between "fourth master" and "uncle," they'd messed up the generational hierarchy by addressing each other the way they did.

Ever since Lin Siquan's departure, Xing Ming's mind was in total disorder. Although the interviewee was easygoing and pleasantly approachable, the conversation often got stuck, which was most likely because of Xing Ming's sullen mood. When Hu Shiyin talked about his passion for sailing or playing golf, Xing Ming found he wasn't able to put in a single word; when Hu Shiyin mentioned the resolute and decisive decisions he made in business, Xing Ming's remarks seemed too immature. He felt like a clown displaying his minor skills in front of an expert

and he'd completely forgotten his outline for the interview, so he had nothing to say after a long time. With a reddening face and ears, Xing Ming inwardly criticized himself for being stupid. If Luo You were here, he would've been able to handle everything no matter how difficult the situation became. It definitely wouldn't be this embarrassing.

Actually, it had drained all his energy to just maintain this conversation and it felt like his brain was being beaten. After more than forty minutes of talking, Xing Ming felt exhausted. Taking a look at those two charming girls beside Hu Shiyin, Xing Ming thought it would be better to talk about some romance with this old but vigorous man.

As expected, once they started talking about sex, Hu Si Ye got really interested.

He talked to Xing Ming about women, asking, "How could a man not like a woman? They're so nice and beautiful with fair skin and soft bodies." He continued, "Your chairman is the kind of man I just can't understand."

Then Hu Shiyin talked to Xing Ming about love, saying, "Young people tend to get too ahead of themselves. By the time you get to my age and position, you'll understand that there is no love in the world, only the new replacing the old. When you meet someone for the first time it's like opening a new bottle of wine. After meeting several times though, the person becomes stale, like a cup of tea that has been steeped many times."

His words made Xing Ming's blood run cold.

Before leaving, Xing Ming invited Hu Si Ye to the TV Station on Monday in order to complete the recording of the episode. There wasn't much time for him before the return of *Oriental TV Line*, so he had to brace himself to hurry up to deal with the complicated situation.

Xing Ming didn't expect the unfathomable man to actually nod and agree to his invitation. It seemed like he had a fairly good impression of him. After looking at Xing Ming, he said something that made Xing Ming feel even more discouraged: "Yu-*shu* has a good eye. You really are quite beautiful."

Outside Hu Shiyin's getaway, Ol' Lin asked Xing Ming, "Which home should we go back to?"

Xing Ming carefully thought over the question and then realized that he'd made an unforgivable blunder—he'd treated that cold, luxurious, and lifeless place as a home.

Seeing that Xing Ming wasn't answering, Ol' Lin told him that Yu-*shu* had hired a nutritionist to take care of his diet and daily life to help him recover from the acute myocarditis more easily.

What is the definition of a home? It wasn't just about a grand mansion that was hundreds of square meters, nor was it about a secret brothel where a self-indulgent man had several trysts with his little boytoys.

Chapter 17

A Blessing in Disguise

Not surprisingly, Lin Siquan was soon on the news headlines, but the car accident wasn't as severe the rumors had said. Although Li Siquan had been thrown out of the car during the crash, luckily a giant tree along the road served as a buffer and saved his life. He survived with only moderate injuries.

While some people said that he'd been driving under the influence, other said he was attempting to commit suicide. Rumors spread rapidly like wildfires. They first mentioned the affair between Zhuang Lei and Ol' Chen. Then they dug up Lin Siquan's old romantic relationships with his ex-boyfriend during college and speculated whether he was in the closet and cheating on Zhuang Lei. Lastly rumors exposed the scandal of Lei Zhiqun, the predecessor of Pearl Station's chairman and alumni of Yu Zhongye, which said that he was released from his position due to bribery which had been reported by his own full-time driver.

The impressive Pearl Station Garden, where tranquil Chang Xin Lake would gloriously glimmer under the sun, and where the stylishly elegant broadcasting buildings were situated, it could be maliciously described as a place full of lust, vanity, and wickedness. No one in Pearl Station was innocent. Every one of them was burdened with the sin of corruption.

After Xing Ming returned to reason, panic grew in his mind as he thought of his previous misbehavior at Chairman Yu's house. At work, everything seemed to be peaceful like usual, yet he hadn't been able to sleep soundly for several days because he was afraid of Chairman Yu's retaliation. He couldn't help thinking it wouldn't stop hounding him until his total defeat, like a storm that doomed him to death. Thinking for a long time, Xing Ming sent a long, sincere, and determined WeChat message to Yu Zhongye. While he didn't mention anything about their romance from the past, he promised to complete his mission in producing high quality TV shows that wouldn't let Yu Zhongye down. Even after he had written his resignation letter though, he hesitated on whether to hand it in. Stuck with an uncertainty that posed as anxiety on one hand and wishful thinking on the other, Xing Ming felt like a resident who lived on a lower floor waiting for the other shoe to drop. Even fear and apprehension couldn't stop him from expecting it, like a dying man just waiting for the clacking sound of the sharp blade to chop his neck in half.

Surprisingly, for the next three days, the "other shoe" didn't drop, and Xing Ming didn't hear anything from Chairman Yu or have the chance to meet him. The TV station seemed to be in quite a peaceful lull.

When Friday came around, Xing Ming finally decided to relax, but then he unexpectedly received a call from Ol' Chen.

Ol' Chen summoned him to his office. It had been a while since Xing Ming had smashed Ol' Chen on the head and this was the first time that they'd been able to talk to each other calmly.

Chapter 18

Screw the Drug Administration

On Thursday morning, Xing Ming sent Candy the new version of the video that they'd revised. They had deleted and changed the parts that she required. Given that they'd taken sufficient footage and since the topic was quite newsworthy, the new version of video successfully achieved the goal of providing enough information. It seemed like they'd got their bread buttered on both sides. On one hand, the video catered to their sponsor's demand and on the other, they'd followed journalistic standards and ethics.

Yet Xing Ming was still unsatisfied. He felt resentment towards Sheng-Yu's overbearing attitude and more importantly, he blamed himself for not being determined enough to stick to his own principles.

However, two hours before the live broadcast, Sheng-Yu made more trouble. Candy said that Boss Liao was worried that the presence of Dr. Liu and Ms. Ji might ruin his reputation as those two nuts would talk nonsense in front of billions of viewers. He didn't want them to be on the show.

Xing Ming became even more disgruntled. He had enough confidence in himself to believe he could manage the situation and keep it under control. Even in the worst-case scenario, he could signal the program director so they could switch to an advertisement, especially since Ji Hui was not Dr. Liu.

In the morning, she arrived even earlier than any staff members on the team and started working on practicing the script with Xing Ming. It was rare for her to put on light makeup and even though it still couldn't cover her morbid color of skin, she looked much better. When Ji Hui spoke, her words were well-organized, humorous, and earnest which tended to give the false impression that she wasn't a seriously ill individual. At the same time, people could easily be moved by her optimism and strong spirit.

But Candy insisted on changing people. Her words were as tough as nails, and she left no room for bargaining.

Xing Ming didn't argue with Candy but instead started an inner conflict with himself. All kinds of thoughts flashed through his mind, like a battle with knives and swords. At one moment, he also thought of Yu Zhongye…

It was true that things could be done easily with sufficient support and resources just like great trees provided good shade.

Did he regret it? It was hard to tell.

Xing Ming was so stubborn that most of the time, he just couldn't persuade himself. Yet this time, he had no choice but to finally decide to meet Liao Hui's demand and replace the interviewees. After being informed, Ji Hui just smiled in understanding. She knew that her illness wouldn't allow her to be on the show for

long in any case.

There used to be other leaders in the pharmaceutical company, but after the company declared bankruptcy, several of the high-level leaders either emigrated or lost contact. Some of them became so dejected that they refused to meet. The only "warrior" at the front line was the incredibly impassioned man, Dr. Liu.

Nan Ling was a clever young man. After making inquiries with several sources about Dr. Liu's relatives, he finally brought someone back before the start of the live broadcast. This person claimed to be Dr. Liu's nephew, who also worked a high-level job in the pharmaceutical company.

The man was called Liu Zhao. After showing his business and ID card, he said that he was Dr. Liu's nephew. With dark eyebrows and a chubby face, he did look quite similar to Dr. Liu. Dr. Liu's job title was the general manager, and Mr. Liu's business card showed that he was a "medical supervisor." Based on his background, he should easily be capable of answering questions from the assessment experts of the SFDA[iv] and Internet users.

The other reporters in charge of outreach tasks in the group had all failed, while Nan Ling smiled gleefully since he knew that he was the only one who'd been successful. Speaking to Xing Ming, he said, "Yesterday, Yu-*shu* wanted me to prepare to participate in a host contest held in Pearl Station, so I'll have trouble you to write a recommendation letter for me. But there's no need to rush. We'll talk about it more when the show is over."

Xing Ming took Liu Zhao's business card and returned the ID card to him. Without acknowledging the words, he just glared at Nan Ling.

A mishmash of emotions was exposed, including those of doubt, judgement, and discourtesy… Xing Ming's eyes were so cold and unsympathetic that Nan Ling was scared by his stare. As his sweet smile faded, even his pretty little face no longer appeared bright and charming.

Only twenty minutes were left before the live broadcast began. The director urged Xing Ming to let the new guest speaker read and practice the script as soon as possible.

Xing Ming initially agreed, but after asking Liu Zhao two questions, he found that his answers were ambiguous. Though they weren't wrong, his responses were too general and broad to have been considered carefully. Liu Zhao explained to him that since there was a clear division in labor within the company and he hadn't fully participated in testing during the research and development of the liver cancer drug Alanine Seronine.

The director didn't take it as a big problem. Even though this topic was closely related to people's lives, most of the audience were regular citizens. What they wanted to see was intense conflict and the debate between logic and emotion. They wished to see how their rights to life and health could be guaranteed when there was a conflict of interest between law and ethics, rather than just a long and tedious medical speech.

Chapter 19

Surging Disputes

Chairman Yu could no longer wait to release the urges and desires that he'd been holding back. After waiting such a long-time, intercourse was even more amazing than ever. Since there was no need to go to work in Pearl Station, Host Xing hadn't gone back to Pearl Station in three days and since there was no way to escape Yu Zhongye, naturally he could only spend his days in bed. On top of that, his 70-square-meter little place ranging from the living room to the bedroom wasn't even comparable to half the size of the living room of Yu Zhongye's villa. With that, he had a justifiable excuse to stay in bed.

Somehow Xing Ming felt more at ease, and he couldn't tell whether it was because they were at his own house. During these past few days, he'd indulged in pleasure as well as idleness and he'd told Ruan Ning to report the daily work summary of the team through email since he had to work at home due to a relapse of myocarditis.

For days, Xing Ming moaned and shouted himself hoarse during ecstasy at night, rendering him able only to send typed messages to Ruan Ning.

They enjoyed intimacy until three or four in the morning and woke up again around eight or nine. While Yu Zhongye was still taking the shower, Xing Ming hurried to escape from the bathroom. He knew that when this cunning old fox was in heat, he'd become crazy in his thirst for sex. Just moments ago, he'd almost penetrated Xing Ming when he'd stood facing the glass shower door.

The study and the bedroom were only separated by a sliding door. To avoid continuing the frantic intercourse with the cunning old fox, Xing Ming didn't dare to go back to his bed again. Instead, he headed into the study and started sorting through the brushes, ink, Xuan paper, and inkstone on his cluttered table. A while ago, Xing Ming had really listened to the chairman's suggestion and intended to practice Chinese calligraphy in order to calm himself down, yet he'd been too busy with his job and besides, he lacked the patience to commit. In the beginning, after having Ruan Ning order a full set of calligraphy supplies on Taobao, he imitated Chairman Yu's elegant and unrestrained calligraphy style, but his finished piece turned out to be more of a pale mockery of Yu Zhongye's work. With a diminishing interest, Xing Ming decided to forget about practicing using a random excuse.

On the table, a photo cut from a newspaper and covered by a pile of random stuff was revealed after Xing Ming cleared up the brushes and paper. He picked it up and stared at it in a trance.

It was an old photo of Tang Wan which had been captured when a media group came to take photos for the winning middle-aged and elderly dance squad in the community. The reporters had all marveled at Tang Wan's beauty and focused their camera on her alone. Tang Wan, who wasn't afraid to be on camera, smiled kindly and gracefully. Strangely, Xing Ming had cut out this photo and included it in his collection for all these years, without taking a look at it or throwing it away.

Chapter 20

I Like You

By the time Xing Ming woke up, it was already early the next morning. After taking a quick shower, he opened the window saw a tranquil, greenish lake and felt a breeze flutter across his face. He was in a strange place that he was unfamiliar with.

As it turns out, he'd been picked up by Ol' Lin last night and was driven out of the city. Yu Zhongye had a mansion that lay in a place surrounded by a lake on three sides. Given the mansion's greater floor space and its location, it could be a excellent summer vacation home.

Xing Ming went downstairs in a bathrobe. Unexpectedly, Yu Zhongye was in a public room and someone else was present as well.

She didn't appear very young or old and wore red lipstick on her pale face with heavy makeup. Additionally, she was well-dressed almost bejeweled by flamboyant colors. Yet her refined manner distinguished her from tacky, vulgar individuals, elevating her to an attractive and gorgeous lady who was suitable to wear any excessively glamorous or even garish makeup. She seemed almost like a trophy-wife.

After self-introduction, she told Xing Ming that she was one of Chairman Yu's old classmates.

Both of them were around the same age. Even though this woman was already over forty years old, she still looked like a charming lady who was only in her thirties. With fair, silky smooth skin, she was just like delicate and flawless porcelain.

This woman's name was Kang Lele. Xing Ming knew this not because he personally knew her, but because he'd heard of her billionaire husband, who was the famous pharmaceuticals leader based in Hong Kong, the one with a net worth of over ten billion yuan.

The name and story of that pharmaceutical billionaire had repeatedly appeared on the news and that was the main reason Xing Ming knew him so well. Despite the news about how this rich man dearly loved his wife in public, he was a renowned playboy who enjoyed the company of many different types of women, including stars, celebrities, and pseudo models. Sometimes, this skirt-chaser would waste a huge amount of money just to entertain one of his little lovers.

Xing Ming had heard of this gossip and so had Kang Lele.

She wasn't a stupid and naive woman who'd believe in true love between her and this upper-class socialite. Especially when he had wealth and a high social status.

"Are you… Shao'ai?" Kang Lele asked after she looked at Xing Ming, guessing

that he might be Yu Zhongye's son. The last time she'd seen him was when Yu Shao'ai was only six or seven years old. She didn't watch national news very often and didn't recognize Xing Ming.

"I didn't expect you to look so grown up." she said.

Without denying it, Yu Zhongye grabbed Xing Ming and had him sit beside him.

"Do we look similar?" He asked with a smile.

Kang Lele sized Xing Ming up carefully and made compliments, saying, "He's so handsome. But he looks more like you than his mother. He looks better than his parents!"

Tracing Kang Lele's gaze, Yu Zhongye cast a glance over Xing Ming. The smile on his face deepened as the lip corners lifted up and he seemed to agree with her praises.

"What's Shao'ai's plan after coming back?" Kang Lele asked.

"He's already an adult. I won't make decisions for him. He said he was going to do an internship at Pearl Station," Yu Zhongye responded before inquiring, "How's your son?"

"A first grader next year." She giggled like a young girl, and tried to turn her charm on Yu Zhongye, saying, "It's all your fault. I thought I'd have a chance after Shao'ai's mother passed away. I waited years for you to marry me, but my current marriage is a mess."

Looking at these two, Xing Ming remained silent. It seemed like they weren't just old acquaintances, but also old flames.

"Why didn't you wait a bit longer?" Yu Zhongye said while a polite smile appeared on his face. "Shao'ai has always needed a mother to take care of him."

"Who would dare to do that? Your father-in-law's secretary once gave me a personal warning…" she said while tossing her hair aside with her hands. Once her hair was flipped back, bald patches on her scalp were revealed. "These scars have remained on my head ever since then and these parts are still hairless. I still remember at that time I was suddenly hit by an iron rod while walking along the street. After getting more than twenty stitches on my head, I fled to Hong Kong. Only at this age have I realized that some people are truly in different worlds. Wealth, fame, and power can bring the rich safe and prosperous lives, while laws are only created for the poor. The lives of those living in poverty are as worthless as specks of dust, and all of them will be overwhelmed by the anomie of the wealth gap."

"Oh, what am I talking about in front of a kid…" Kang Lele continued, letting out a long deep sigh, before suddenly looked at Xing Ming with a sweet smile. "Although your grandpa is extremely skilled and powerful, he only loves his grandson, am I right?"

Chapter 21

Scarlet Words

By the time Xing Ming returned to Pearl Station, Zhang Ci (lil' Ci) and her family had already arrived. Ruan Ning was in charge of taking care of this family in terms of providing basic needs like food, clothing, and accommodations. Although Chairman Yu hadn't arrived yet, Ol' Lin was already addressing the problem on expenses with Xing Ming.

In front of Ol' Lin, Xing Ming opened the envelope the other man had brought him and was slightly shocked after taking a clear look at the amount of money written on the check. Due to Chairman Yu's great generosity, the money he was receiving was be ten times greater than expected.

He looked up at Ol' Lin, trying hard to conceal his astonishment.

"This is too much." he said.

"It's Yu-*shu*'s love. Feel free to take more if needed." Ol' Lin said lightly with a smile like he was giving pocket money as a reward to a little lover on behalf of his superior.

As a leading public institution within the industry, Pearl Station owned several joint-stock daughter companies, which were controlled through Pearl Station's ownership of shares. There was no doubt that the TV station was well-versed with the laws of the business jungle — "kill or be killed."

With regard to the major follow-up by Pearl Station, Xing Ming never heard them from Yu Zhongye even during the days they were together but found some of the related grapevine online. It was rumored that Pearl Station planned to move to the newly built central business district, and the main reason was because the business value of a city's downtown was the bulwark of development. In establishing a win-win partnership with a local real estate enterprise, the Station forced a housing demolition and relocation to the area in which an influential state-run film enterprise was located. Such a coercive measure evoked contentions in the film company and became more and more inflammatory. Greater conflicts were triggered.

In recent years, given that numerous non-governmental film firms were sprouting up and growing rapidly, old state-owned firms were desperately trapped by the bottleneck of development due to the restraints of the public sector, out-of-date filming techniques, narrow-mindedness, deficient funding, and a lack of social media marketing.

However, the strange thing was, people's love and feeling toward these old film companies hadn't worn away completely. More recently, none of the produced films had been complete flops. Like an aged, ailing mother confined to the sickbed for a long time, they were detested and abandoned when alive, yet they were missed upon death. "Love and sentimentality" possessed a strong power. Lin Siquan had

almost managed to win against his well-matched opponent, Luo You, by gaining support through "love and sentimentality" from his old audience. Now one particular old film company was using the same strategy to turn public opinion against Yu Zhongye. While suggesting the fact that power corrupts and destroys ideals and dreams, they also used the tides of the media to plant the idea that money puts feeling and love to death.

Facing the ongoing disputes between the two companies, Xing Ming deeply understood there was nothing he could do to help Yu Zhongye based on his own capabilities.

Xing Ming started to believe Luo You's words that except for the time of having sex with Chairman Yu, he was nothing more than a menial paramour. His worth would only be measured through sexual intercourse, for the wrong times in which he was born, wherein all his ideals, dreams, and ambitions decayed and became too incongruous, naive and in vain.

Staring at the huge amount of money he'd received on the check, Xing Ming felt assured at the whim of himself. If someday Chairman really was fed up with playing the game of "fake lovers," at least he could still gain the rich reward of a "fuck-off fund" from the chairman.

"Love is a choice more than a feeling," as each time the feeling would easily fade. Time flies and it's hard to go back to before. However, if there was one choice between money and love—only money would last forever.

Well, well.

Since its six-month trial period hadn't been completed, *Oriental TV Line* had far less funding than Pearl Line. To achieve the best possible program result, Xing Ming often supported the team financially to make up the difference. After receiving a sufficiently large amount of money from Chairman Yu, he became more generous, and served lil' Ci and her family well. Everyone was satisfied except for him who'd become concerned by one issue—he'd suddenly lost contact with Zhang Hongfei.

After asking around he heard from other people that Zhang Hongfei received a job transfer from Niu Ling Prison to a drug rehabilitation center in another province during the days Xing Ming had spent a time with Yu Zhongye in the mansion near the lake.

The job transfer happened out of nowhere and was really strange.

Xing Ming had only just began delving into the case after Su Qinghua had told him his father's last words. The information age hadn't come around yet during the years when Xing Hong had been jotting down all his thoughts and motivations and calling for action with enthusiasm and passion. At the time of Xing Ming's investigation, following the bankruptcy of *Economic Daily News*, Xing Hong's published reports had been hard to find. With the help of Su Qinghua, he'd spent tremendous efforts and time gleaning information and clues, and finally collected almost all the news reports. His success could mostly be attributed to his work as a media professional, who made more connections and learned multiple channels to

achieve the goal.

At that time, as a medical student, Xing Ming had been studying anatomy and at the initial stages of dissecting a corpse. In front of the tank in which the formalin-treated, embalmed, and purplish-red dead bodies were stored, he'd maintained absolute composure—he'd never trembled, despite his heart thumping, nor had he ever shown any excitement or fear. Xing Ming had been expressionless whenever he stood still at the dissecting table.

However, he'd failed to keep his usual composure while reading his father's news reports. Strong emotions were easily evoked by writings. While reading, Xing Ming had frequently felt cold sweat on his back, and at times his hands had turned cold and clammy, and tears wouldn't stop flowing out of his eyes. He'd felt terrified and proud.

Several news articles were listed—freeloading, an abuse of public resources, of a City People's Procuratorate office caused an unjust case; a director of the Housing and Urban-Rural Development covered up the unapproved construction projects for his mistress; the contract killing of the whistleblower by a president of a state-owned coal mining group company—each event was so sensational that his father must pluck up his courage to be the truth-teller at a high cost.

Among the many heavy hitters mentioned in the news reports, while some had already experienced downfalls, other were recently in the process of *Shuanggui*[ix]. Albeit most of them left the field, a tiny minority of them enjoyed great success with a prosperous political career.

Hong Wanliang was one of the very few lucky men, as well as the most influential and powerful one among all those heavy hitters.

Xing Ming had intended to spend part of the "pocket money" he received from Yu Zhongye on bribing Zhang Hongfei. Wealth dictated everything, and a light purse was a heavy curse; while power coerced people into a surrender and cracked the whip to reach the goal easily. In the past, Xing Ming was just a little fish in a big pond without power or resources, but now at least he had money.

After Zhang Hongfei disappeared, an idea—albeit to some extent, an extremely vicious one—sprang to mind. He could go home to visit his mother. This was just the right time when Tang Wan was in urgent need of money. After all, money talked, and it might force his silent mother to disclose the truth of her ex-husband's false imprisonment to her son.

Xing Ming threw a stack of cash in front of Tang Wan, impolitely, like he was throwing money at a prostitute. He asked her point-blank about his father, yet unexpectedly received no answer. Rather than taking a look at the money or casting her gaze toward her son, whom she hadn't seen for a while, Tang Wan just slowly played with her hair, and then deliberately rearranged a vase filled with Casa Blanca Lilies. The sunshine poured down from her head, casting lights onto half of her face, while leaving the other half in shadows.

He immediately noticed that Tang Wan had trimmed her bangs and dyed her hair chestnut brown. All of a sudden, she looked much younger—not like his mother,

but more like a sister.

Tang Wan told him she had given up dealing with the issues in the Xiang family and had filed for divorce. A businessman that she'd met while teaching her dance class had fallen in love with her. Despite her concerns that he was a talkative man with excessive enthusiasm, a marriage of convenience wouldn't bring harm to her or Xing Ming. Since this businessman was also a member of the National People's Congress, maybe someday the power of his political and social standing could assist her son's career development in the media industry.

Although Xing Ming planned to bluff and "blackmail" his mother, he never expected that his tactics would so easily be beaten as she beat around the bush and avoided the topic.

"I know you have always disliked Ol' Xiang," Tang Wan said when she finally looked up at him. The pair of eyes were full of anticipation and tenderness, revealing an eagerness to make amends with her "dear son."

"Xiang-*shu* is… he's fine." Xing Ming stated.

In fact, it didn't matter whether he liked him or not. All in all, it wasn't Xiang Yong's fault for doting on his only biological son.

"I don't like him much either," Tang Wan said, sighing. "From now on, it'll be you and me."

"You, you're so… you're such a… You're hopeless," Xing Ming stuttered.

He couldn't help it even though as a popular, articulate host.

Marriage, family, responsibilities, and promises were all worthless. This cruel woman didn't give a damn.

Xing Ming stormed off after slamming the door.

He found a time to visit Xiang Yong before the live recording of the latest episode of the show.

For a long time after Xing Hong's death, all Xing Ming's good memories about family had been worn away. Xing Ming always felt like he was being grasped by loneliness and had lost his sense of belonging. The Xiang household providing him with shelter was one of the few lights piercing that darkness.

Now Xiang Yong was re-starting his restaurant business, but he was no longer a wealthy restaurant owner like before. At noon, his job was to sell rice dishes, and at night, he ran an outdoor food stall. He was very good at cooking; Tang Wan used to never cook at home.

Xing Ming happened to witness harassment when a few men hired by the loan shark arrived. They kicked down Xiang Yong's food stall, while the crushed meatballs fell and rolled across the ground.

Chapter 22

The Kingdom and the Beauty

Xing Ming watched *Pearl Line* at home and found Luo You's discussion about the problem caused by the media power abuse of the media and the failure of the public charities and private foundations quite insightful and enjoyable.

Luo You presented the topic and stimulated debates with composure, confidence, and admirable professionality. He managed his emotions well as a host and even had perfect control over his tone and facial expressions while asking penetrating questions. Getting personal should always be avoided for a journalist otherwise objectivity would be hard to maintain. Exemplars as uncynical and placid as Chairman Yu or as tender and affable as Host Luo were mostly favored.

But Xing Ming deeply knew that he wasn't that kind of man.

His acrimony partially came from his face with his pale complexion and obvious hostility. People criticized him for speaking too fast and being too aggressive even when he subtly changed his facial expression. A critic used to mock him for being a "haughty yet average man," writing sarcastic critiques suggesting that he should become an actor.

Xing Ming had to admit that Host Luo's capabilities in the studio were beyond reproach. But despite agreeing with Luo You's critical and creative viewpoints, his attitude didn't win Xing Ming's approval. From beginning to the end, *Pearl Line* purposely ignored Liu Chongqi's side of the story. Although it was reasonable and justifiable to call Liu a suspect, such impartiality seemed blatantly cold-blooded.

While Liu Chongqi had been arrested, he still hadn't been legally convicted in court. *Oriental TV Line* planned to invite members of the Liu family to the show so that there could be a round of debates with lil' Ci's father. However, the eldest daughter Liu Yamei refused to show up and the young daughter Liu Yanan remained unreachable.

Several attempts to contact Liu Yamei had been made and yet each of them failed. Even when Xing Ming called her during the show, the call was rejected almost as soon as it connected.

From the start of lil' Ci's parents' accusations, the Model Worker had continuously denied sexually assaulting the girl. Days ago, when reporters from *Oriental TV Line* went to his village for interviews, most of the people didn't disbelieve about Liu's crime. Yet ironically, the situation changed abruptly as stinging rebukes from the villagers were incited at a rapid growth during *Pearl Line*'s live broadcast.

Following lil' Ci, two more families had come forward to accuse Liu Chongqi of sexual assault on their daughters. Liu Chongqi persisted in denying it, but no one believed him. Once the media fueled the public outrage, the eruption was insane.

"I think the saying goes 'women conquer the world by conquering men.' But it turns out that they are not necessarily all women since most of the bitches who crawl into your bed for sex have the same intentions. Yu-*shu*, please listen to me, that little brat has ulterior motives, and you don't need to take him too seriously."

i The National Radio and Television Administration (NRTA) is a governmental bureau in China.

ii In Chinese philosophy, *qi* (or ki or chi) is life energy, homonymous with 'breath'; the idiom is using *wordplay.*

iii These are lyrics to "Love You Ten Thousand Years," a Taiwanese song originally adapted from a Japanese song called "*toki no sugiyuku mama ni*," but not necessarily with corresponding lyrics. The last time the Chinese version of this song was popularized was by Wu Bai&China Blue in 1995 via a live performance, though it had been previously performed by other groups.

iv SFDA stands for State Food and Drug Administration, which is quite similar to the American FDA.

v These first started in Beijing. A group of uremic patients who couldn't afford the cost of hospital dialysis treatments came together and bought three sets of second-hand Hemodialysis machines for self-treatment. However, this kind of service was unregulated, so they were taken over by the government in 2004 after a medical reform.

vi Both are government-granted professional titles, the former being specifically for primary and secondary educators, and the latter being a cross-industry stamp of state approval.

vii This annual state-sponsored program honors people who, in the past year, have conducted themselves in a way that is outstandingly touching.

viii This was first used by Joseph Stalin for writers and other cultural workers before it was popularized by the CCP.

ix It is an internal disciplinary process conducted by a CCP commission on members suspected of "violations of discipline." Usually, this refers to corruption, but it can occasionally carry other connotations as well.